

## Law Day Activities: A Few Programs from Around the Country

By Francine Bailey

As you may already know, Law Day has been a part of the ABA history for many decades now, and young lawyer affiliates throughout the country have participated in Law Day projects for several years. Over the years, state and local bar associations have taken the general concept of Law Day and turned it into their own. Many affiliates have made Law Day their banner project of the bar year—one that the general public looks forward to.

Law Day activities have expanded to include all areas of public interest. Affiliates use art, essays, speeches, classroom instruction, job shadowing, and various presentations to reach the public and increase awareness of the importance of the rule of law. Often, activities focus on students, in the hope that early, positive interaction with the law will have a great influence on them.

Law Day has proven to be so successful in some areas that affiliates have expanded their activities from one day to a full week. Law Day has also been a successful vehicle for providing partnerships among various organizations to increase public education. In this article, *The Affiliate* looks at just a few of the programs put on by affiliates around the country.

### Nebraska State Bar Association

Part of the appeal of Law Day is its flexibility to provide public education about the law, within the parameters of the size and mobility of each affiliate. One such organization that has had Law Day activities for several years is the Nebraska State Bar Association (NSBA). The NSBA holds its Law Day activities in conjunction with the Nebraska State Bar Foundation. Activities can range from an essay contest to job shadowing with local legal professionals.

In past years, nearly 100 legal professionals have volunteered their time to give hundreds of students an opportunity to learn more about various areas within the legal profession. The winners of the Law Day Essay Contest are announced and invited to the Law Day Luncheon at the Governor's Mansion.

### New Orleans Bar Association

The New Orleans Bar Association's Young Lawyers Section (NOBA YLS) also holds annual Law Day events in May. To keep things running smoothly, the NOBA YLS appoints a Law Day program chair. The chair of the 2009 program was Alona Croteau. According to Croteau, in 2009, the YLS decided to focus on the Law Day program more than it had in past years. Fourth grade students from the greater New Orleans area were invited to participate in an essay contest to discuss what the Gettysburg Address meant to them.

On Law Day 2009, students then attended a program at the Federal Courthouse. A local federal judge gave a presentation on Abraham Lincoln, celebrating the bicentennial of President Lincoln's birthday. The student essay contest winner was also presented with an award and given the opportunity to read his or her winning essay.

As featured on the Law Day website at [www.abanet.org/publiced/lawday/2007/history/libertyaward.shtml](http://www.abanet.org/publiced/lawday/2007/history/libertyaward.shtml), a highlight

### Law Day—May 1 *Law in the 21st Century: Enduring Traditions, Emerging Challenges*

The American Bar Association encourages all young lawyers to take part in this tradition of honoring the rule of law by celebrating Law Day in schools and throughout their communities. Law Day programs can take many forms. Panel discussions, community dialogues, mock trials, and classroom presentations are just a few examples of how bar associations and legal professionals have celebrated Law Day around the nation.

Visit [www.lawday.org](http://www.lawday.org) for resources, tips, and tools on how to conduct a Law Day program. Download the Law Day Planning Guide for classroom activities. Generate ideas for presentations and programs by visiting the "Reflections on the Theme" section. Learn from others' experiences conducting programs in "Law Day Success Stories."

While online, visit the "Law Day Alliance Members" page for possible organizations to collaborate with in your community and access the ABA *Dialogue on Law in the 21st Century* online to use in classrooms and community settings. The *Dialogue* explores three topics: reforming American government for the twenty-first century, distributing music and copyright, and pirates and the law.

Good luck with your Law Day 2010 programming. Please do not hesitate to contact the ABA Division for Public Education ([www.abanet.org/publiced](http://www.abanet.org/publiced)) with any questions or comments. We are here to assist you in your Law Day planning to ensure you have the most successful program.

## American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division *The Affiliate*

of Law Day activities is the presentation of the Liberty Bell Award. State and local bar associations present Liberty Bell Awards to nonlawyers in their communities who have “performed outstanding community service by promoting a greater respect for the law and contributing to good government in the community.”

In New Orleans, NOBA accepted nominations for its Liberty Bell Award from the local legal community. The Law Day Committee, led by Ms. Croteau, then selected a winner that best met NOBA’s criteria. The recipient of the award is an individual in the community who upholds the rule of law, has contributed to good government within the community, stimulates a sense of civic responsibility, and encourages respect for the law in the courts. The recipient’s contribution should speak to the mission of NOBA, which is: “New Orleans Bar Association will be instrumental in preserving the dignity and viability of the Rule of Law in post-Katrina New Orleans, thereby providing the Bench and Bar and community-at-large a belief in the City’s future.”

Ms. Croteau told *The Affiliate* that the 2009 program was a success and that NOBA YLS will continue to have Law Day activities.

### **Wisconsin State Bar Association**

An affiliate that has made Law Day a banner project is the State Bar of Wisconsin YLD (WI YLD). Each year, the WI YLD hosts events in schools around the state during which young lawyers volunteers go into both urban and rural classrooms. For many students, this is their first experience meeting an attorney.

The Wisconsin program allows a great deal of mobility and gives lawyers throughout the state a chance to interact with and teach students from grades kindergarten through twelfth grade. A majority of the volunteers are young lawyers, some of whom return to their alma maters for the day. Lessons are derived from ABA Law Day materials available on the ABA Division for Public Education website that teach students about how the law impacts everyday life. Volunteers, students, and educators love the program, allowing the WI YLD to put volunteers into more classrooms around the state each year.

To learn more about various Law Day programs and awards, visit the ABA Division for Public Education website at [www.abanet.org/publiced/lawday/home.shtml](http://www.abanet.org/publiced/lawday/home.shtml).

---

*Francine Bailey is an Associate Editor of The Affiliate and an Associate with the The Bellows Law Group, P.C., in Chicago, Illinois.*

---